

*Main Article:*

## **A Psychoanalytic Approach to Fieldwork**

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### **Abstract**

This article focuses on what both psychoanalysis and anthropology have in common: the emphasis on the researcher's own experience. An ethnographic fieldwork will be used to illustrate how a psychoanalytical approach unfolds the material when studying conditions for learning from experience among teachers in two Norwegian junior high schools, and also the strong methodological implications of this approach. The researcher's struggle to remain open is elaborated. Here "openness" is regarded as something more than a principle for research practice. It is a way to relate both to oneself and the other, to emotions as well as actions, to the inner as well as the external world.

**Index Terms:** ethnographic fieldwork; psychoanalysis; field relations; negative capability; infant observation; projection; introjection; learning from experience

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### **1. Introduction**

When it comes to the question of how professionals develop empathy or build good relationships, we often hear, "You can only learn from experience." It refers to learning about relational conditions in professional work, which is not only a matter of skills. Teachers, nurses, or social workers who emphasise the interpersonal aspects of their work have seen that experience does not necessarily result in positive learning or change. On the contrary, experience can lead to further distancing, more rigidity, lack of transparency, and stagnation. So what is really needed to learn from experience?

I addressed this question in an ethnographic research project among teachers in two different Norwegian junior high schools (Ramvi, 2007). The fieldwork extended over a

period of 1 school year and included extensive observations of teachers, individual interviews, and focus group interviews with a number of teachers in the two schools. The goal of the study was to illuminate the conditions for learning from experience. I attempted to relate the psychoanalyst W. R. Bion's (1962/1991) theory of learning, in contrast to those with a linear understanding: those who define learning as having knowledge of pre-defined competence or skills (French, 1997). Bion's fundamental understanding is that all learning takes place in or through relationships. To learn from experience is, according to Bion, to process the emotional by being able to contain and tolerate the emotions and being able to give them a meaningful form. A mother's capacity to contain and transform her child's raw emotions creates the experiential foundation for the child's ability to think. Bion uses the metaphor container-contained to picture this emotional experience of care and being cared for. This experience is considered to be a prototype for human interaction.

Based on this understanding of learning, I specified three research questions: (a) What characterises the teachers' relationships (with pupils, colleagues, leaders, and partners)? (b) What kind of experiences challenge the teachers? (c) What kind of support do the teachers experience in order to handle emotional experiences?

In the light of Bion's theory, my assumption was that no relationship could be uncontaminated by primitive impulses. A teacher-pupil relationship is no exception (French, 1997). Not only does the teacher-pupil relationship consciously behave towards each other in a certain way, they also continually transfer earlier mental states to current relationships. The teachers' everyday life is thus characterised by emotionally charged situations and experiences that do not always allow for thought. In order to understand this, I need what Bion (1962/1991, p. 86), calls a "binocular vision." The term refers to the conscious and unconscious dimensions of experience produced simultaneously "as if they were binocular and therefore capable of correlation and self-regard" (*ibid.*, p. 54). Bion says we cannot have knowledge about ourselves in the sense of knowing ourselves from the immediate experience of ourselves. It means that even if human beings are self-interpretive, the unconscious constitutes a limit to our self-understanding. It is, in other words, not just what the teachers themselves say about the emotional experience that is important—it is also important to capture situations where the teachers avoided "seeing" the emotional and relational side. I was interested in how expressions of emotion were allowed and how they were handled by the individual and in the community of teachers. At the same time, I wanted to grasp the meaning the teachers attributed to their own experiences. My perspective challenges a view of people and organisations as entirely rational and my method had to allow for that.

Bion says however (1978, p. 44): "I am sick and tired of hearing psycho-analytic theories—if they don't remind me of real life they are no use to me." Therefore, in this article my main emphasis is on the "real life" I experienced through my fieldwork and the analysis process, where I give special attention to what both psychoanalysis and anthropology have in common: the emphasis on the researcher's own experience and the need for openness. I illustrate the analysis process by an example of one teacher, Solveig (all names have been changed) and her relationship with her pupils.

## 2. The Fieldwork

The starting point for this fieldwork was two newly graduated teachers, whom I call Kristin and Solveig (both 26 years old). Both Solveig and Kristin gave me permission to observe them throughout their first working year, and the fieldwork was conducted at the two schools where Solveig and Kristin began their work, starting from their first working day. Solveig and Kristin were my principal information providers as well as my door-openers towards the larger group of teachers.

### 2.1. Focus During the Year

My fieldwork extended over 1 school year (from the beginning of August 2002 to mid-June 2003). I was in the field on average 2 days a week during this school year, 1 day at each school. The days varied in length, however, usually 3 to 5 hours.

At the beginning of the school year, I was occupied with getting to know the people and the system. I focused on my two principal informants and I observed and talked with them during class hours and at meetings. However, the conversations were always short and they were seldom undisturbed. This phase was frustrating. How should I maintain focus? I let myself be pulled along, believing everything to be equally important. It seemed to me that I was not observing situations that were “emotional” enough. To “calm” myself and to be “sure” I had obtained sufficient data, I decided to do interviews. The difference between field conversations and what I call interviews is that the interviews were arranged ahead of time, were recorded, and transcribed afterwards. I interviewed 8 teachers at one school and 12 teachers at another, and some of them more than once. The interviews lasted between 1-2 hours. In these interviews, I asked the teachers to tell me about significant relationships and emotions, such as those arising from frustrating experiences with pupils, colleagues, or leaders. I developed an interview guide, in order to ask everyone the same questions. In contrast, field conversations were more informal, more unstructured.

During late autumn, I refined my observations and conversations by defining and following specific events which had developed during the two earlier phases, or which came about later. The teacher’s narratives from these events developed in different ways. Now and then, a teacher came to me and said: “Do you know what happened?” Kristin did exactly that when she told me her story about when she lost her temper in class (Ramvi, 2010). When teachers told me their narratives about an incident I always asked them to tell me their personal experience in as much detail as possible. Through these detailed descriptions and by re-living the incidents, the teachers’ emotions from the situations they related could be revived and expressed. By relating such “experience-near” (Geertz, 1988) accounts or specific incidents, the teacher provided his/her “self” interpretation.

Every story I heard placed earlier episodes or something the teachers had expressed in a new light. It could, in a way, fill out the story. Likewise, when a story had been told to me, I always tried to follow up on it by asking what had happened later. While doing fieldwork, I was also experiencing some of the events myself. Sometimes I was also

provided different stories in different ways about the same event. Narratives have a conventional structure that are arranged to provide coherence. However in a psychoanalytic perspective we are interested in incoherence, conflict, and contradictions. Thus it was important to try avoiding too much narrative coherence (Hollway, 2003).

The last 2 months of my fieldwork were distinguished by bringing the interviews to a close. In addition to a concluding interview with each of the two principal informants, I tried to think through whether there were any loose ends in connection with the fieldwork, and whether there was anyone I had not spoken to or whom I should speak to once more. I also conducted four group interviews, two at each school, where I asked the group of teachers to discuss topics I still had questions about, questions that had emerged during the fieldwork such as: What is it to “know” a pupil? What is a good relationship with a pupil? What about bad relationships?

I took field notes (a logbook) every time I was in the field. The experience of taking field notes can be the first step for an observer in processing the experience, internally sorting out impressions (Sternberg, 2005). I divided my field notes into four types:

- (a) *Log*. On-going notes made at the school of what I saw, heard, felt, and thought. I usually noted immediately as situations occurred, and transcribed on the computer when I got home.
- (b) *Analytical tracks*. All thoughts I had about the context and meaning of what I observed or which arose when I transferred the notes to the computer.
- (c) *Theoretical tracks*. Notes that connected my observations to theory.
- (d) *Reflective issues*. My own experience as a researcher, observations others made about me, and what I saw and felt in the field. Such reflections on the researcher’s relationship to the research field are a key issue for psycho-social research (Froggett & Wengraf, 2004).

## 2.2. Research Attitude

I was concerned about being and remaining open to what I experienced in the field and to what the teachers told me. This openness is connected to “negative capability,” a concept Bion borrowed from Keats, which embraces the capacity to tolerate uncertainty. Bion says:

There is always a craving to slap in an answer so as to prevent any spread of the flood through the gap which exists. Experience brings it home to you that you can give what we call “answers” but they are really space stoppers. It is a way of putting an end to curiosity especially if you can succeed in believing the answer is the answer. Otherwise you widen the breach, this nasty hole where one hasn’t any knowledge at all. (Bion, 1978, p. 22)

This meant I had to avoid rushing to premature judgement or labelling people. I had to wait and take time to process the data before interpretation. Ethnographic fieldwork is a method where waiting, observing, and thinking are allowed over a long period of time (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998). The openness I was concerned about was also

connected to another idea in psychoanalytic thinking, namely that we do not always know what is going on. This could be in contrast to the scientific requirement about systematic categorisation of what is going on. However, according to Bion (1967) the psychoanalyst has to “discipline his thoughts” (Bion, 1967, p. 272) to be able to interpret the analysand (i.e., the person undergoing psychoanalysis). He describes this state of mind as being without “memory” and “desire”:

Memory is always misleading as a record of fact since it is distorted by the influence of unconscious forces. Desires interfere, by absence of mind when observation is essential, with the operation of judgment. Desires distort judgment by selection and suppression of material to be judged. (Bion, 1967, p. 272)

Bion wants to clarify that the analysis is not an intellectual process, but that it is primarily about understanding, and depends partly on the analyst’s intuitive abilities. This is applicable for me as a researcher, and directs me to placing emphasis on responsiveness to what happens in the field through its emotional impact rather than on preconceived ideas. This openness refers to something more than a methodological principle; it expresses a way to relate. It is about a sincere desire to listen, see, and understand. Trying to learn this way has deep emotional implications and is important for research that aims to explore what is behind immediate appearance. This type of in-depth learning is used in *infant observation* which is part of the Tavistock tradition and used for developing the observational capacities of professionals in training (Miller, Rustin, & Shuttleworth, 1989; Reid, 1997). I wanted to allow the world of the teachers I observed to impact on me, as described in the infant observation method. During the fieldwork I did not use this method in its “pure” form, but I was inspired by this way of emphasising the creation of “experience nearness.” Infant observation also required that I constantly had to work with self-reflection, contain my feelings, endure my own and others’ pain without immediately reacting, have patience, and learn to trust what I observed. This could be challenging as what I observed could often be a “sensitive” subject that triggered a reaction within me. It was important but difficult to refrain from reactions that foreclosed on my ability to go on observing with curiosity. I noticed, for example, that I might feel like participating and “interfering” in discussions between teachers. I also struggled to refrain from “intervening” when I witnessed situations between teacher and pupil or between colleagues, where I considered one of the parties to be badly treated by the other, or in situations where, in my opinion, they gave each other bad advice. In other words, I struggled to contain (Bion, 1962) my own feelings in order to maintain negative capability.

Being a researcher in the field, it was challenging in many ways to endure the experience of not knowing. Based on my field notes, I could, for example, see how questions from my research colleagues about “results” from the field work increased my use of a dictaphone and formal teacher interviews (mentioned earlier). This illustrates the connections between my intellectual and personal dispositions, and my methodological choices, and it says something about how difficult it is to leave uncertainty aside, maintain negative capability. Personally, I also found it difficult to experience being “insignificant” in relation to the teachers I had no close contact with. They wondered what kind of “research” I was conducting, as I just stood there and observed. This

triggered a personal fear of not being good enough. There were times when I felt a need to show them that I was “someone,” and that I was “knowledgeable,” and I had to consciously hold that urge back. This frustrating experience indicates something about me, as a researcher, but also about the school. My feeling that it was difficult to be “one who does not know” may be considered an expression of expectations that existed in school, perhaps a low tolerance for “not knowing.” In this case I had interesting “experience nearness” with both pupils and teachers.

Infant observation as used in the Tavistock model includes 1-hour observations followed by interpretation in seminar groups. During my fieldwork I had no opportunity to attend any interpretation groups. This made it difficult to process my own feelings and reflect. I made use of an on-and-off contact with the teachers to gain a distance so that I could reflect on my experience on my own. I had to do two movements alternately—share the teachers’ perspective and at the same time stay in my own perspective as an “other” to the teacher (Robert L. Katz, in Fog, 1994, pp. 1-25). However I established reflection groups to help me sort out my own responses in relation to what I observed after the fieldwork was finished. I will elaborate on this in the next section.

### 3. The Analytical Process

As researchers, we often privilege our intellectual over our emotional capacities. However, in Bion’s perspective, we have heard that thinking and learning are also about the ability to endure and contain the frustration of not knowing, being in uncertainty. While this was crucial within the field, it remained important when working with the transcribed field notes. It was still important not to “jump to conclusions” and maintain negative capability.

I can describe the process of analysis in two stages: first, a phenomenological analysis close to the teachers’ own accounts and reflections upon work, second, a psychoanalytically informed analysis of significant data from stage one. The first stage of analysis consists of “raw material” and the patterns I chose to pursue. “Raw material” is field notes and transcripts. “Data” are characterised by being a form of interpretation, based on my intuition and identification of significance. Here is a more detailed way to indicate the process of analysis:

- (1) Fieldwork (conversations and observation).
- (2) Transcript material (sorted in different stories, themes, and events).
- (3) Analysis of Kristin’s and Solveig’s narratives that finish with an interpretation that gives clues to what supports the teacher in learning from experience or what undermines the teacher’s learning from experience.
- (4) The clues are tested against other raw material; I also search for examples and stories that show the opposite.
- (5) Psychoanalytical interpretations of thoroughly founded clues for understanding the conditions that undermine or support the teacher in his/her efforts to learn from experience.

In the next section I will illuminate the interpretation process by using Solveig and her narratives about relationships to pupils as an example. This illustration of Solveig's relationships to her pupils is also used in an earlier article (Ramvi & Davies, 2010). In the present article I will give special attention to how my own experience was important to understand her relationships.

### **3.1. Example of First Stage Analysis: Solveig's Relationships to Her Pupils**

Solveig is very concerned with relationships and says: "You cannot do anything with the pupils unless you have a relationship with them. You will not mean anything to them." Her account of a good relationship to a pupil is the one she has with Espen. He had shown her "incredible trust," she said. Solveig in turn had felt:

Care—an incredible amount of care. I try to explain to him why it is so important that he works, and that I am concerned about him . . . when you get such a relationship of trust with a pupil, you know them better and you know they care for you. . . . I am very concerned with respect and trust towards the pupil and clearly I appreciate it when the pupil gives me the same back, that they come to me with their problems, that they open up. Then I feel I have done what I want to do.

Solveig thinks of another good experience with a pupil and speaks about Laura who came to talk to her: she "unburdened herself," Solveig said. Solveig felt the situation was good because:

She [Laura] contacted me. I experienced it as showing trust. It warms me. Why me? . . . Then I feel that I have achieved something. Then I have shown myself to be that person that I want to be.

Solveig elaborated what she meant by a "person that I want to be":

That is a person that people can come to. I want to be a person the pupils know cares, and wants to offer much. I would have done everything for them; I would have gone and picked them up at home if I knew it would help, and . . . that is the person I want to be, and . . . I hope that I manage to keep at it. So [in her relationship with Laura] I got a confirmation, in a way, for my own part . . . I must have done something right.

Solveig is largely concerned with what she "accomplishes" in her relationship with pupils or what she fails to accomplish. She said about Espen later in the year:

The change I have tried and hoped to accomplish in him, has been to build his self-confidence. [She did not succeed] . . . Now it was just to get him through the school year. And when I started to realise that, I was very frustrated. . . . you are not able to do the job you intended to do.

Solveig experienced pupils she didn't connect with as the most difficult. In a pupil's dialog with Solveig, a pupil had just answered monosyllabically: "don't know," "sure". Solveig said:

Strange stuff. I see myself as straightforward. As a rule, I get a good connection with most. But to sit with a pupil where you are absolutely unable to connect . . . I feel . . . I feel very insecure; I sink as a person. Thus the confidence I normally have, the faith I have in everything and . . . being able to stand in front of people . . . everything fell apart in that situation. The pupil dominated with not answering . . . and shut me out . . . and [it was] . . . terrible. She shut me completely out . . . I meant nothing.

Solveig's narratives gave clues to the findings at the phenomenological level about the teacher-pupils relationships. One of the clues from her stories is: the teacher connects her self-esteem to the quality of her relationship to her pupils. This follows by a hypothesis that the relationship between the teacher and the pupil is vulnerable.

I looked for support for this clue and for what could be understood as the opposite in the total material where all the teachers' accounts were included. It was confirmed that both by talking about good relationships and absent relationships, the teachers illustrated their high ideals of mutual recognition and trust in relationships. From the whole group of teachers it was claimed that the relationship to the pupils was "alpha and omega" to be able to teach pupils anything. It became clear how personally they experienced their role, and how dependent their self-esteem was upon the relationship with the pupils. The data suggested that teachers also have their own strong needs for confirmation in a teacher-pupil relationship.

At this stage of the analysis I reflected on the consequences for the teachers' self-esteem to feel dependent on teenager's engagement in the relationship. This could not be a solid one. It became obvious that the teacher needed a lot of other support and containment to feel confident and competent as a teacher. Where or what were these other resources? Such reflections emerged and gave rise to analysis of, for example, the experience of support and containment from colleagues and leaders. Other related hypothesis emerged as for example that exactly because relationships are supposed to be very important—failing in these very relationships feels threatening, and as a sign of incompetence. Even if relationships are valued it may be assumed to be an area of tension. No one wants to feel incompetent, especially being a teacher in a school setting. So maybe the teachers not only wanted to engage in relationships, maybe they also avoided them at the same time? I was looking for answers and different views in the material.

When working on this phenomenological level of analysis I used notes from "analytical tracks" in addition to the transcripts from the log and interviews. Reflections I had early in the fieldwork were easy to forget, and now looking back in my "analytical tracks" I was reminded of how I thought then—and these thoughts became alive in a different way in the context of the whole fieldwork. Looking back to "analytical tracks" also prevented me from having a single tracked mind. For example, the teachers talk about how

important their relationships to the pupils were was something I had noted in “analytical tracks” very early. However I continued to ask myself in these notes: What is it the teachers do that shows that relationships are so important to them? Why is this so difficult to catch sight of? I also used my notes from my own “reflective issues” to try to understand what was going on.

### ***3.1.1. My Relationship With Solveig***

It is particular to ethnography to emphasise a developmental aspect in “becoming an informant” (Andersen, 1999). The relationship between the researcher and the researched is described as a relationship, interplay, and cooperation, with a possibility to grow as time goes by. So let us turn to my own relationship to Solveig, and how it developed. With Solveig, I felt our contact was very easy in the beginning of the school year. I wrote in “reflexive issues”:

When Solveig has some free time, I feel that she has time to talk to me. I heard she told other teachers that I often asked her about things she has never thought about. “I like to reflect on what I do and what I feel,” she said, among other things, to the other teachers.

However, things changed after a while. I increasingly felt that I was disturbing Solveig and I felt uncomfortable requesting conversations. Towards the end of September 2002, I wrote in “reflexive issues” that I had a feeling that she resented my interest in other teachers. I wondered about this feeling almost as a feeling that I was abandoning her or letting her down when I paid attention to the others. I felt that Solveig was dishonest when we communicated. She often continued her work without talking to me when I came, while also saying “you certainly want to have a chat.” During the winter, talks with Solveig became increasingly superficial; I wrote: “She has nothing to say. ‘It’s okay,’ ‘I am in a hurry,’ and so on.” In June 2003 I wrote: “I feel unsure regarding Solveig (a bit helpless), her duality is difficult. I feel that she so strongly emphasises the relational, but does she also have contempt for it?”

The availability of external support for the interpreting process of my own relationship to Solveig was essential. A specific function of this support was to enable me to reflect on my own blind spots, blockages, and dispositions to interpret the material in particular ways. I participated in two different interpretation groups while being in the analysis process, during the year after the field work. We were peers together with a professor looking closely and critically at selected transcripts together. The result of my study was dependent on these critical reflections provided by others together with my own experience and interpretations.

With help from the groups I was able to realise how I sometimes identified with certain components in the teachers communication, seemed to ignore other parts, and reacted with morality or compassion in other situations, and so on. We reflected within the groups on my experience of my relationship to Solveig and I became aware how our relationship reflects her contact with colleagues and pupils. As shown in the material, I

had noticed when she did not achieve what she had planned in the relationship with her pupils she more or less distanced herself. Solveig wanted just to get through the school year, perhaps to be finished with her work and to be finished with me. Her way of behaving towards me had many similarities with the way she felt threatened by the pupil from the pupil's dialog. She made me feel insecure, I felt she shut me out, and she made me feel I meant nothing to her. As a result I started to avoid our contact.

### 3.2. Second Stage: Psychoanalytically Informed Analysis

In the next stage of analysis I used a psychoanalytical framework to illuminate data that emerged from the first stage analysis. In this article I limit myself to the one piece of data based upon Solveig's narratives which were supported by many other stories and event: The teachers connect their self-esteem to the quality of the relationships to their pupils, which seems to make the relationship vulnerable. I will give a short account of how psychoanalytic thinking can illuminate this piece of data through my relationship with Solveig.

I experienced duality in Solveig's relationships, both with her pupils and with me. This duality was also found in the wider community of teachers and formed the basis for me to suggest that there is a gap between what the teachers say about relationships and what they in fact do. Data gave me reason to suggest that within the school setting there is an ambivalent attitude towards the reality of the statement that the relationship with pupils is vital. Both positive and negative emotions are directed towards relationships at the same time. The social reality in the school shows this ambivalence though they do not talk explicitly in these terms. Ambivalence is very difficult to articulate both because it would be regarded as politically incorrect and because it has an inner explanation that is hidden for the teacher herself. I myself experienced Solveig's ambivalence to relationships.

From the first level of analysis we can see that in some of her relationships Solveig had experiences of not being the person she wanted to be. She experienced feelings of incompetence or failure in relationships. Another way of saying this is that there are qualities in relationships that threaten her identity. Humans are likely to protect themselves against threats to identity. One way of protection is to project difficult feelings. In this light I could have been a receiver of Solveig's *projection* of incompetence and failure. To me these feelings hit me at a time when, as I have already described, I was afraid of not being good enough myself. The result was two persons that slowly lost contact, distanced from each other. Both of us experienced and suffered from a pressure to be competent. In that situation I was not able to contain her projections. As mentioned earlier, Bion uses the notion "negative capability" to explain his concept of containment (1962), "the ability to hold enough to be able to hold something for another as well as for oneself" (French, 1999, p. 1218). I was not able to transform Solveig's unbearable feelings and give them back to her in the way her self-esteem would allow. In Bion's theory, this process of projection and *introjection*, transformation of emotions and experience, is thinking, which irrevocably changes the thinker and his/her perception of inner and outer reality (White, 2002). By this, Bion points out why thinking is difficult. We unconsciously avoid or resist knowledge about feelings we are not able to contain.

Paradoxically the frustration and pain of being in that state of not knowing may result in “thoughtless actions” as displayed in the situation between Solveig and me. The process of learning from experience seemed to be difficult for both of us in the situation with lack of containment.

The feeling of incompetence as unbearable could be a very unique personal experience by Solveig, or it could be connected to something unique to a school context. My interpretation is that the school does not allow for individuals to feel inadequate, helpless, weak, or ignorant—feelings that easily arise in relationships. Thus the concrete stories and events Solveig was involved in became a part of a larger story, including many teachers, about how the teachers avoided difficult feelings rather than create conditions for learning from experience.

#### 4. Conclusion

My relationships with my informants allowed me to experience a nearness to the area of tension that affected the teachers in their learning from experience: the tension between professionalism and impartiality on the one hand and nearness and personal engagement on the other. On the basis of data in my ethnographic study it was possible to define good contact between teacher and pupil as a relationship of trust where both show that they care about each other; the pupil by being open and willing to talk about himself or herself, and the teacher by offering care and concern. This kind of “good relationship” made teachers feel as if they were good teachers. Within this limited definition it was easy to feel inadequate and a sense of failure. These emotions are difficult to contain, especially in a school setting.

To live in an area of tension is to live in uncertainty. Most of us find this difficult and we tend to choose either one or another side and thereby close off “half the truth.” To learn from the experience of tension we need negative capability. This concept of openness has become pivotal in this project, not only for me as a researcher but also for the teachers. Both Solveig and I closed down our opportunity to learn from the experience of tension between us, and instead both of us felt rejected. If I had had the opportunity to reflect upon my own feelings together with others while I was there in the field I may have been able to create negative capability for both of us to risk the uncertainty in our relationship. Instead, both of us chose a similar coping strategy—we chose to distance ourselves from the other.

The parallel processes between the teachers and me, and between the teachers and their pupils have become clear. We cannot expect teachers to create a vigorous community of learners among pupils if they have no parallel community to nourish themselves (Price, 2000). In the same way I found it difficult to maintain negative capability both in the field and in the analytical process without a research community to help me reflect. While at the same time I was studying conditions for learning from experience, I needed conditions for learning from experience myself to be able to conduct this research. Viewing research as a human and interpersonal process means that psychological

processes also determine the quality of the research. My own ability for empathy, my openness, and my ability to use myself as a tool in the research process was essential.

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